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WHISPERS**

Senators aren't the only ones having sudden second thoughts about the nomination of Robert Gates to replace William Casey as head of the Central Intelligence Agency. Some old CIA hands worry that Gates, though a career intelligence analyst, lacks Casey's prestige and ties to the President seen needed to keep the agency from losing influence.

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White House officials aren't the only ones who goofed in the Mideast. Pulitzer Prize winner Seymour Hersh apologized to former National Security Council aide Howard Teicher for mistakenly saying he knew profits from Iran arms sales went to the Contras. Hersh also reported U.S. intelligence placed Libyan leader Qadhafi in his office hours before last year's air raid, but records show bombing orders were given 10 days earlier, when nobody knew where Qadhafi would be.

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